

Give us none of that dirty water

Invasive weeds will be treated, water will be inspected

Part two of a two-part series
By Andria Farrell
MPG Newspapers

DUXBURY – *Dirty Water*, a song written by the Standells, has become an anthem to Boston, or even all of Massachusetts, and Red Sox nation. At each game the Sox win *Dirty Water* plays in the background and millions of fans chant along, "I love that dirty water."

Maybe Massachusetts has come to love dirty water, but what is it about dirty water that people love?

The Charles River, like many South Shore rivers, becomes increasingly more contaminated when it rains. Due to storm water drainage issues when it rains, oil, grease, gasoline, pet waste, cleaning agents, pesticides, fertilizers, and trash on streets, parking lots and other hard surfaces wash into storm drains. From there, pollutants discharge into the rivers, ponds, streams and bays. These pollutants can seriously degrade water quality for fish and wildlife habitat, and for recreation. This situation is happening in the rivers, streams and bays

throughout the South Shore.

A recent report by the Watershed Action Alliance has brought renewed attention to water issues facing the region.

The Massachusetts Highway Department was set to begin repairing and repaving Route 3A from Marshfield to Kingston this summer. The state Department of Environmental Protection stepped in and asked that, as they work on 3A, they also fix the storm drains. Now, as they repair the road MassHighway will construct a better drainage system that will help alleviate some of the drainage problems Duxbury experiences.

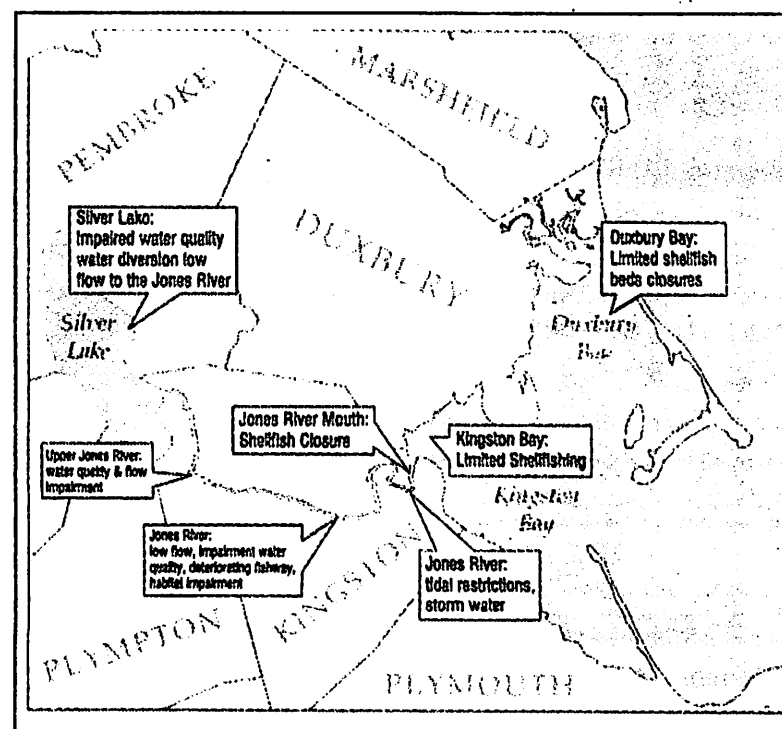
One of the problems with the drainage system now is that it directly dumps rainwater into local water bodies. The system being implemented would drain the water off the road into the land where it can be distributed into the ground and filtered naturally before entering the streams, rivers and bays.

The Duxbury Conservation Department received a \$21,000 grant to test watershed basins after a rain storm to determine where the most polluting water is being dumped from. There are, however, 48 watersheds in a two-mile stretch in the Bay Road area that dump into the

See **WATER**, Page A39

DUXBURY REPORTER **A39**

FRIDAY, APRIL 21, 2006



Staff illustration/John Cardinal

Trouble spots – Problem areas in the Jones River watershed

Invasive plants, pollution, threaten water supply

■ WATER, from Page A1

bay, according to conservation administrator Joe Grady.

The Conservation Department first eliminated the watersheds that were too small to cause harm, and now will begin to test the water.

One of the suspected areas of pollution is the watershed basin that receives water run off from Halls Corner. Due to the highly populated and commercial area, this water basin may be one of the main sources of pollutants. However, until testing is completed, these assessments can only be seen as speculation. The Conservation Department expects all its testing will be done by the end of June so they can begin to clean the water.

According to Grady, aside from implementing a better storm drainage system, some of the ways to help keep the water clean are by "cleaning the streets regularly with street cleaning sweepers, and maintain and cleaning watershed basins regularly."

Grady also said water pollutants do not only come from street run-off. He said that a major source of water pollutants near the Stan-

dish Monument is attributed to dog walkers who do not dispose of their dogs' droppings properly.

Aside from the storm water drainage issues, Duxbury also has a growing problem with fragmities in the salt water marshes. Fragmities are a plant alien to this region. Their rapid takeover has almost depleted the environment that usually flourishes in the salt marshes. Fragmities can grow up to 12 feet tall and spread at a rapid pace. These plants are also hard to get rid of. One of the methods used to destroy fragmities is by cutting the plants down several times a year. However, this method is less than 80 percent effective and can take up to 25 years before it begins to work.

Recently, the Duxbury Bay Maritime School received permission to use Rodeo, a chemical used to kill plants, to kill the fragmities on a small marsh area close to the school. Although Rodeo is almost 100 percent effective, they do not yet know how harmful the chemicals are to the natural habitat of the environment. The school used the Rodeo chemical only in an isolated area of marshland, where there are no commercial shellfish beds. This

The Duxbury Conservation Department received a \$21,000 grant to test watershed basins after a rain storm to determine where the most polluting water is being dumped from. There are, however, 48 watersheds in a two-mile stretch in the Bay Road area that dump into the bay.

spring the school will attempt to re-plant spartine plants, the natural plant of the salt marsh, to see if there are any effects from the Rodeo on the growth of the plants.

The fragmities contribute to the loss of nutrients and natural habitats in the salt marshes and disturb the natural flow of water.

There are 147 dams larger than six feet in the South Coastal Basin. One problem dam is the Island Creek Dam. There has been a significant decline in alewife in Island Creek due to the dam. The fish ladder built for the alewife in the Island Creek dam has deteriorated over the years and no longer functions properly. It is believed that because of this the alewife can no longer reach the creek for spawning, thus

causing a depletion of the fish to this area.

The South Coastal Basin encompasses 240 square miles from Cohasset to Plymouth, containing 16 communities, 15 rivers and 78 significant lakes. The Department of Environmental Protection assessed 16 rivers in the area in 2001. They found that 49 percent of rivers and 40 percent of ponds no longer support natural aquatic life. Thirty percent of the rivers assessed are not considered safe for recreational use, such as swimming and wading. sixteen out of the 17 estuaries are impacted by pathogens.

Bacteria and pollution in residential areas are the number one concern with water systems in the area. Runoff from the streets and poor

drainage systems create uninhabitable waters for shellfish and other aquatic organisms.

One way to put the dirty water situation into laymen's terms is by thinking of it in terms of snow. When snow first falls it blankets the ground with pure white crystals that shine bright by the light and create a mystical winter wonderland. A few hours later the snow that surrounds the roadways and sidewalks turns a dark shade of brown. The snow is taken over by muddy dirty tires, oil and gas leaks, trash leaks, dumpster secretions, animal feces and other pollutants. The pure white winter wonderland is the same messy dirty pile melting away into the ground and draining into our nearby streams and rivers, polluting our water.

The next time *Dirty Water* comes on the radio think about why that song is great. Then think about the snowy picture described above. Dirty water is more than just a song, it is a plea from the rivers, lakes and bays of Massachusetts to help make them clean again. Catchy song maybe – however, not such a good catch for fish and shellfish.

**We welcome your letters to the editor
P.O. Box 959, Plymouth, MA 02362**
